



**PH 125 Introduction to Philosophy (3)
Winter 2003**

Instructor: Terry Fach

Office Hours: Tues & Thurs, 9 – 4 pm

Class Times: 9:45 – 11:30 a.m. Tues/Thur

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Location: Room 501

Required Texts

Ed. L. Miller, *Questions That Matter: An Invitation to Philosophy*, 4th edition.

On Reserve

TBA

Course Description

Most people have no clear understanding of what philosophy is all about. Many take their first impression of philosophy from what they have heard other people say, and often that is something rude. But perhaps the critics are right. Is the study of philosophy just “a bunch of head-games”? Will it be dangerous for someone with deep religious beliefs? Will it deal with topics that have relevance for the practical matters of our lives?

In the coming weeks we will consider these questions and others as we investigate both the history of Western philosophy as well as some traditional philosophical problems. The lectures, class discussion, and assigned readings will show why some of these problems have resisted easy solution down through the ages. More importantly, they will help class members to develop valuable intellectual skills and resources, and to better orient their lives.

The examinations, quizzes, and written assignments are designed to encourage careful listening, reading, and reflection, and to measure the student’s progress over the course of the term.

“Philosophy, when superficially studied excites doubt;
when thoroughly explored it dispels it.” *Francis Bacon*

Course Objectives

1. An improved understanding of the concepts, problems, and methods of philosophy.
2. An improved ability to think critically—and sensitively—about some traditional problems of philosophy.
3. Increased self-confidence and self-knowledge through reflection, reading, and discussion.
4. Development of critical reading and speaking skills.

“Man is but a reed, the weakest thing in nature, but he is a thinking reed.”
Blaise Pascal

Course Schedule

To be handed out separately.

Course Requirements and Grading

1. Short Quizzes

These are short, 10-15 minute quizzes given at the beginning of class to insure that students are reading the assigned passages in the text. There will be 5 of these, worth a total of 10%. You will be given a one class warning when a quiz will be given.

2. Two Essays

Two essays will be assigned over the term. Although these essays are to be only 5 - 7 pages in length (typed or word-processed, 1.5 or double-spaced), it is expected that they will be very carefully written, with particular attention to style and argument quality. Each essay is worth 20% of the final grade.

Essay 1 due date: February 14th

Essay 2 due date: March 28th

Important: Please turn in one copy of your essay (keeping one copy for yourself) to my mailbox no later than 5:30 p.m. on the day that it is due.

2. Mid-Term Examination

Based on class lectures and readings, this exam tests knowledge of basic terms and concepts, important arguments, and some important names and dates. Format will be both short answer and essay-style questions.

Examination date: Tuesday, February 25, 2003

3. Final Examination

There will be a final examination in the April examination period worth 30% of the final grade. This examination will include both short-answer questions and longer essay questions, and will be based completely on material covered by the class lectures and assigned readings. It is, therefore, highly advisable to attend class regularly, ask questions if you do not understand lecture material, and to take careful and extensive notes.

Final Grade Breakdown

Term work/exam	Total %	Score
5 short quizzes	10	
Essay 1	20	
Essay 2	20	
Mid-Term Exam	20	
Final Examination	30	
TOTAL	100	

Grading Criteria

It goes without saying that some of the grading done in a course like this depends on the critical judgement of the marker. That does not mean that the standards of good writing and argumentation are entirely a matter of individual preference. Part of what you will learn in a class like this one is the set of standards used by academics teaching in this discipline. If you have questions about what lies behind the assignment of a particular grade, or if the comments on an assignment leave you uncertain as to what you would need to do to improve it, please consult me and I will be happy to discuss the matter with you.

What follows is a rough guide to grading criteria used in this course:

An **A** essay or examination answer is free from most stylistic, technical and factual errors, demonstrates an excellent grasp of the subject matter, is exceptionally well-organized and well-argued, and exhibits a fair degree of originality (where that is required).

A **B** essay or examination answer is free from most stylistic, technical and factual errors, demonstrates a good grasp of the subject matter, is well-organized and well-argued beyond the level of mechanical repetition of text or lecture material and shows some promise of originality.

A **C** essay or examination answer contains some stylistic, technical or factual errors, demonstrates an average grasp of the subject matter, but in a repetitive and mechanical fashion, and exhibits some elementary organizational and argumentative ability but without any evidence of originality.

A **D** essay or examination answer contains excessive stylistic, technical or factual errors, fails to demonstrate a grasp of the subject matter in even a routine or mechanical fashion, is poorly organized and void of argument and originality.

The following chart matches letter grades with a brief description and percentages:

A+	Exceptional	96-100
A	Excellent	91-95
A-		86-90
B+	Very Good	82-85
B	Good	75-81
B-		72-74
C+	Satisfactory	68-71
C	Adequate	63-67
C-		60-62
D+		56-59
D	Marginal	50-59
F	Failure	49% and below

Important Notes

1. Late or Incomplete Term Work

Assignments are expected on the day that they are due. No term work can be submitted for credit after the last day of classes. No essay will be accepted after a due date unless approved in advance by the instructor.

2. Class Attendance and Preparation

All students are expected to attend class regularly and to prepare for lectures and discussions. Those unable or unwilling to attend regularly or undertake this preparation cannot expect to do well in the course and should consider other options.

Students will regularly be asked to form "Discussion Groups" in order to reflect and share understandings gained by careful reading of assigned material. Obviously, coming to class unprepared for these discussions will result in a waste of your own time. Moreover, you will miss out on an opportunity to contribute to your peers' efforts to learn and grow in their understanding.

3. Contacting the Professor

As a half-time instructor at NUC I am not available to NUC students on every weekday. **Please note that my office hours this term are Tuesdays and Thursdays.** See me after class if you have questions or concerns, or call me to arrange an appointment (571-2550 ext. 229). You can also reach me by e-mail: Terry.Fach@nuc.edu